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Wading in before Diving in: Preparing Library Students for Professional Participation

Thielen, Joanna; Stuit, Martha

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WADING IN BEFORE DIVING IN

Preparing Library Students for Professional Participation

Martha Stuit | stuitm@umich.edu
Joanna Thielen | jethiele@umich.edu

What is QuasiCon?

What:

Unconference + professional-like conference = QuasiCon

Who:

- **Host:** American Library Association (ALA) student chapter
- **Attendees:** Library and Information Science (LIS) students and professional librarians

When:

Annually in February, since 2012

Where:

University of Michigan School of Information (UMSI), Ann Arbor, MI

Theme for 2016:

What Libraries Can Do for You!

Why is a student-led conference needed?

LIS students need ...

- an introduction to professional conferences during graduate school
- experience giving presentations to a professional audience
- space to informally discuss ideas, outside of the classroom
- to learn how to network in a low-stakes yet professional-like environment
- an opportunity to engage in service work

QuasiCon 2016 by the numbers

47
attendees

10 librarians
3 UMSI faculty

27
presenters

+ 1 keynote speaker

9 Planning
Committee
members

50-60 volunteer
hours per member
4 mos. of planning

5th annual
conference

90 bagels, 2 sheet
cakes, and countless
cups of coffee
and tea!

Benefits of a student-led conference

For library students

As presenters

- Learn to submit a conference proposal
- Prepare visual aids; practice presenting
- Experience presenting and addressing audience questions
- Add presentation to their CVs



Attendees explore online resources during a presentation of data visualization and literacy

As attendees

- Choose among conference sessions
- See a model for professional presentations
- Gather ideas for their own presentations and projects
- Network with professional librarians
- Interact with professional organizations

As members of the Planning Committee

- Develop valuable skills: marketing, fundraising, proposal evaluation, event planning, project management, and service work

For professional librarians

- Hear the range of interests of students
- Glimpse the current LIS curriculum
- Scout future talent for their library
- Recruit for professional organizations
- Share their expertise from the field
- Demonstrate professional engagement and lifelong learning
- UMSI alumni: Reconnect with their alma mater

QuasiCon promotes...

Diversity



Keynote speaker: Jennifer Taggart, Assistant Head of Youth Services at Bloomfield Township Public Library and *Library Journal* Mover & Shaker

Presentation: Creating inclusive programming and collections for patrons with special needs

Information literacy

Attendees participate in the scholarly conversation, one of the frames in the ACRL Framework for Information Literacy in Higher Education.

Inclusion

QuasiCon is free and open to the public. Held at UMSI, the conference is accessible to all UMSI students.

Lessons learned

- ✓ Create a **diverse** Planning Committee. Each member brings unique strengths, experiences, and professional network
- ✓ Send **targeted requests**, which yield more responses than blanket email requests
- ✓ Provide **food** for attendees, including those with dietary restrictions. Ending the day with cake has been a hit!
- ✓ Pick **swag** that adds value to the conference
- ✓ Build a **support network**
- ✓ **Assess** the impact of the conference by gathering attendee feedback
- ✓ Collect **suggestions for improvement** from the Planning Committee members



QuasiCon 2016 gave attendees dry erase markers to use on the whiteboard tables during the uncoference discussions

Acknowledgements

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- Members of the Planning Committee
- All attendees
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